



Recruiting and Retention

Issue

The military needs to strengthen its bonds with the American public. Today, fewer officials, parents, teachers, counselors, or employers have experienced military service and therefore are not in a position to advise youth on military life.

Background

Fewer Americans have military experience than ever before. With a smaller force serving at fewer bases, there are increasingly fewer Americans who have direct experience with our military. Fewer people know someone who serves—or has served—in uniform. The transition from the draft to an all-volunteer force in the early 1970s also decreased broad military experience, knowledge, and understanding. Today, fewer elected officials, journalists, teachers, business owners, and employers have experienced military service.

Current Status

Strengthening the bonds between the American public and the military has been a key priority of Secretary Cohen throughout his tenure at the Department of Defense. The military really mirrors our society. The American people need to recognize the relevance of our military to their daily lives and the outstanding quality of our servicemembers.

Current Initiatives

The Department is in the process of reconnecting the military with American society. One example is the Yahoo! Fantasy Careers Contest that took place from Armed Forces Day through Independence Day. This contest provided civilian Americans the opportunity to meet the extraordinary men and women of the United States Armed Forces by allowing five individuals to experience a day in the life of a soldier, sailor, marine, airman or coast guardsman. Another way the Department is trying to close the gap is by educating the adult influencers (parents, family members, teachers, coaches, etc.) of youth on the opportunities and benefits of military service. This will be accomplished through national print and regional television advertising as well as a new Web site, www.todaysmilitary.com.



“Look at presenting the military to the American public as more than just a job with benefits and education . . . that we appeal to the young people to be a part of something bigger and better than themselves.”

*—Master Gunnery Sergeant
Patricia Orsino*



Issue

There is a need to market the right image to the American public. The military is more than pay and benefits; it is commitment and a patriotic duty. Marketing campaigns may have focused too much on education benefits and not enough on the individual lifestyle transformation that results from being part of something bigger and better than oneself.

Background

The strongest employment opportunities in the history of the All-Volunteer Force, coupled with increased college attendance by high school graduates, combine to present significant challenges as we seek to win the war for talent. Nonetheless, recruit quality across the Services remains high.



Current Status

Today, there is a war for talent. The Department continues to fight this war by making the American public more aware of the opportunities, benefits and privileges of military service.

Current Initiatives

Each of the Services and DoD work with advertising agencies to craft the correct message for the target audience. Some Services more easily portray the intangible benefits of the military than others. Nonetheless, DoD advertising seeks to communicate to adult influencers the tangible and intangible benefits of military service. Both are important aspects of what the military has to offer young people. This message needs to be communicated to an audience that increasingly has very little experience with the military.



Issue

While advertisers often go to great lengths to market life in the military as a very realistic mental and physical challenge, recruiting campaigns can foster unrealistic expectations of military life. Recruits and young servicemembers are dissatisfied and are leaving the military. Often, they are not challenged at their first duty stations after completing initial entry training, nor are they utilized in jobs that fit their skills or training. For the first time, mid- to senior-level personnel are leaving as well and retention bonuses for those beyond 14 years of service may be needed.

Background

While aggregate retention continues to show improvement, there are continuing concerns in a number of enlisted technical specialties such as maintenance technicians, intelligence analysts, communications-computer operators/repairers, linguists, and air traffic controllers.



Current Status

Current reenlistment bonus programs offer payments to selected individuals with between 17 months and 14 years of service. This bonus window allows the department to offer additional incentives to highly skilled or shortage career fields as they reach critical retention decision points. To date, the 17-month to 14-year window has proven sufficient in light of our ability to adjust payment levels within that window.

Current Initiatives

While current retention trend analysis does not indicate an increase in losses after 15 years of service, there is anecdotal feedback to the contrary. The Department will continue to study this issue closely and, should the situation warrant, request changes to existing legislation.

The issue of recruits and young servicemembers leaving because the military does not challenge them or allow them to fully utilize the skills in which they were trained is a challenge best addressed by the senior enlisted leadership within each Service's operational units.

Issue

PERSTEMPO is affecting the attitude of many military members. Happy members are our number one recruiters. The experiences they are carrying back to their communities do not always track with the message in current advertising. Many members believe they are being deployed too much or are doing twice the work in garrison while others are deployed.



Background

The Secretary of Defense and the Service Chiefs are aware of the impact that time away from home has on morale and the quality of life of our servicemembers. Service leadership has implemented measures that limit time away from home-station during the inter-deployment period.

Current Status

Congress, in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2000, requires the Department of Defense to establish uniform standards for policies relating to the deployment of units and personnel away from their duty stations and to establish uniform reporting systems for tracking deployments.

Current Initiatives

The Department of Defense and Congressional leadership are defining individual tempo metrics. These metrics will document the time spent away from home and yield insight to the actual levels of tempo our people are experiencing, how these experiences affect retention, and how we can improve the quality of life for our all-volunteer force.

We are committed to maintaining both the near-term and long-term readiness of our armed forces through careful PERSTEMPO management.



Issue

Recruiters work under demanding circumstances. The duty is not voluntary and is driven by quotas, which are difficult to achieve. Recruiting duty needs to be made more desirable by offering more incentives and easing overall demands.

Background

Recruiters often work long hours under the stress of meeting assigned goals within a prescribed timeframe. Assignments to areas that are remote to military installations means a lack of military-sponsored support mechanisms and facilities and an increase in out-of-pocket expenses.

Current Status

In response to today's recruiting challenges, the Department has formulated and is executing a number of reengineering and privatization initiatives. Initiatives are being tested to evaluate their ability to create or enhance military awareness, identify and exploit new recruiting markets, improve recruiter efficiency and effectiveness, and enhance recruiter quality of life. Further, the tests are focusing on recent advances in technology and will leverage existing resources for a better return on investment. Given today's recruiting challenges, it is paramount that the Department develop innovative strategies to attract, manage, and retain high-quality servicemembers.

Current Initiatives

To create new market opportunities, we are enhancing and expanding DoD presence on the Internet, testing civilian telemarketing encompassing both inbound and outbound calling, and exploring innovative ways to penetrate the minority market and the college and college-bound market.



To improve recruiter efficiency and effectiveness, we are developing a prototype virtual on-line recruiting station, testing remote enlistment processing, testing the effectiveness of civilian administrative assistants in recruiting offices, automating fingerprinting capability at Military Entrance Processing Stations, and promoting recruiter quality-of-life initiatives.

The Department proposed legislation to increase the level of Special Duty Assignment Pay and to authorize reimbursement of Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) parking for recruiters. Both the Senate and the House have

endorsed these provisions, and we expect enactment within the next few months. We will then work with the Military Services to develop implementation plans and timelines.

In response to concerns about access to quality, affordable health care for active duty members such as recruiters, assigned to remote locations, the TRICARE Prime Remote Program was established. It will provide TRICARE Prime-like benefits (with no deductibles or cost-shares) to active duty members nationwide who work and live more than 50 miles from a military hospital or clinic.